



THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

Daily Devotion at Zion + December 13, 2020 AD + [Advent Season](#)

This Week: Devotion in the Darkness

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5).

Darkness crowds the Christian. “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness” (Ephesians 6:12). Not in spite of our Baptism, but precisely because of it, “the cosmic powers” seek to ruin Christian believers by leading them into despair, hatred, and fear through a web of sorrows, sins, and persecutions—as Martin Luther noted, Christians don’t need to go looking for a cross; it usually finds them! Yes, despite being given the joy of the ages in Christ, Christians can often be crowded by darkness.

Yet “the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

The grave could not contain Jesus; the cross could not silence Him. As He filled a stable with light at His birth, so does He enlighten the Christian in every age. Devotion serves as a lantern of that light, bearing Christ to us in the midst of every darkness, casting the shadows away as we walk with our Lord. Advent and Christmas, seasons in which we light candles in dark winter months, are good times to reflect on this role of devotion and to light the lamp of the Word and prayer once more.

About the Cover Art

Did you see that the young woman is holding a plate with two eyeballs in it? This painting by Francisco de Zurbarán (1625/1630) depicts Saint Lucy, a young Christian woman martyred in Sicily in the early centuries of the Church’s life. Devoted to her fellow believers, she would travel by night (against government orders) to bring them food. She was caught by a group of young pagan men who, among other things, gouged out her eyes and cast a lance through her neck. She holds a palm branch, a sign of the martyrs (Rev 7:9). She wears red for her martyr’s blood and green and white for youth and virginity.

How Does the Christian See?

Christ has promised to His followers a whole new life with new and risen flesh. His resurrection is the glimmer of our own: a new heart, with new hands to raise in thanksgiving, new eyes to see the glory of God, and new ears to hear His voice.

Devotion equips us with a foretaste of that new body. Through the Word of God and prayer, Christians learn to speak, hear, see, and feel differently. We even learn to “see in the dark.”

How? We walk by faith, which is its own kind of vision. When haunted by the gloom of death or the shadows of hatred and sin, we see Jesus on His cross, bearing those things for us. When troubled by the night of doubt or despair, we see the dawn of God’s faithfulness, dispelling our lack of faith. That inner watchfulness is simply our risen eyes beginning to emerge, fluttering their lids open to the bright morning of Jesus’ presence.

Daily Readings for the Week of December 20 (Advent 4)

S Isaiah 11:1-9
Ephesians 6:10-20
John 3:16-21

Rev. 21:22—22:5
Luke 1:39-56

CHRISTMAS BEGINS

M Isaiah 11:10-16
Revelation 20:1-10
John 5:30-47

F Zechariah 2:10-13
1 John 4:7-16
John 3:31-36

T Isaiah 28:9-22
Rev. 20:11—21:8
Luke 1:5-25

Sa Wisdom 4:7-15
Acts 6:1-7
Acts 7:59-8:8

W Isaiah 29:9-24
Revelation 21:9-21
Luke 1:26-38

Th Isaiah 31:1-9

These readings correspond to pages 91-116 and 127-138 in Vol. I of For All the Saints. To acquire For All the Saints, please contact the church office.

A Prayer for Travelers in the Night

Christians always travel by night, and yet, they always walk in the light of Christ. We are like the Magi, traveling through the night to see the Christ, led by His light in the miraculous star. This prayer speaks to God from within both realities: the fleeing night of sin and the dawning rays of Christ's presence.

O Lord, true Light:

You turned darkness to day with just a word,
creating a universe of stars and galaxies.
Even so, You have shone in our hearts
to give us the light of the knowledge of Jesus Christ,
creating us anew in grace and truth.
Let that truth be my lamp on every darkened path;
make that grace the sunlight by which I see all things.

When I walk in the valley of the shadow of death,
fill it with the light of dawn that Mary Magdalene saw
early on the first day of the week.
When my feet trip on a darkened path,
and my sin, ever before me, clouds my sight,
clear my eyes with the mercy and health
that you gave to the old beggar of Jericho.
When the ancient foe veils my heart with fear,
and the true light grows dim within my heart,
sweep both foe and fear away with the same glory
that enlightened the hearts of the apostles.

For in You, Lord, there is no darkness at all.
The sun fades and the stars fail in Your presence,
for You alone are the light of the city of Zion.
You show Your face, and the whole creation shines.
Shine, therefore, on me and all your people
and all the works of your hands
for the sake of Your Son, Jesus,
the bright morning star that never sets.
Amen